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Press Release

Mandatory Standards necessary for decorative paints in Sri Lanka

08 March 2010, Colombo- This refers to the Lead in Decorative paints Global Study conducted by the Toxics Link and International POPs Elimination Network in collaboration with the Centre for Environmental Justice, Sri Lanka and other organisations in ten countries.

The research was carried out only for the randomly selected products of four brands out of dozens of brands available in Sri Lanka. It was found that all samples contain lead in different levels which are as low as 4 ppm to as high as 137, 325 ppm. Except one brand, other enamel paint samples exceed the permitted level which is 600 ppm as per the SLS standards.

No limit has been mentioned in the SLS standards for emulsion paints. The limit given under the United States is only 90 ppm. Except one sample, all other emulsion paint samples contained less than 90 ppm of total lead concentration.

It has been brought to our notice that one paint manufacturer in Sri Lanka has claimed that they are the only Sri Lankan brand whose paints are safe from lead and environment friendly according to the international standards. Meanwhile, one or more manufacturers claim that they too have lead free paint. We believe that no manufacturer or retailer of paints in Sri Lanka can claim that their paints are free of lead without presenting systematic, independent test results that can verify such a claim. We like to bring to the notice of general public that "Our tests were not exhaustive, we did not test paint from every manufacturer, and we only did random sampling from a few manufacturers. We therefore advice refrain from taking undue competitive advantage from the study.

Mr. Hemantha Withanage, Executive Director of the Centre for Environmental Justice said that "current SLS voluntary standards are not sufficient for curbing lead in Paint. We are very concern about the silence of the Government agencies. It is our understanding that the Consumer Affairs Authority, Ministry of Health and Nutrition, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and Sri Lanka Standards Institution should take actions to provide MANDATORY STANDARDS and to ENACT REGULATIONS for manufacturers to comply with."

Lead has been recognized as a prime toxic by WHO, impacting over 40 million children worldwide. Lead in paints had been responsible throughout the world for being a silent poison – particularly when used on walls and items that children would lick or chew.

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